



  
DYNAMIC MARKETS

# *Flexible Working 2009*

Independent Market Research  
Commissioned by

**AVAYA**

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## The extent of flexible working?

This research shows that 66% of employees in Europe and Russia work on a flexible basis where they set their own flexible working hours and can work from any location they choose – countries where this way of working is especially common include Russia (84%), Germany (72%), France (71%) and Italy (65%), whereas the UK (58%) and Spain (52%) lag behind [Chart 1].

On average, these employees spend 3.69 days a week working on a flexible basis – but the averages are slightly higher for Germany (4.10 days) and Russia (4.14 days). Indeed, 1 in 5 employees spend a full 5 days working in this way – and again, more so in Germany (31%) and Russia (25%).

But a more informal approach is enjoyed by 16% who are able to work on a flexible basis ‘as and when’ – and this relaxed attitude is especially common in Italy (23%) and Russia (25%), but is less common in Germany (13%), Spain and the UK (both 12%).

Job seniority seems to be key with more senior staff working on a flexible basis: indeed, 83% of senior managers and directors work this way, compared to 76% of middle and 68% of junior managers, and the number is even lower

for admin staff. However, there is little difference between large companies and SMEs, but there is a difference between employees of different ages with more of those aged 18-24 (74%) working this way.

The research also shows that more part-time workers (75%) work on a flexible basis, compared to those in full-time posts (64%), as do more of those in semi-retirement (90%); and 70% of working parents work this way; as do 73% of workers expecting their first child.

## Value to the economy?

### Employment benefits:

85% of employees in Europe and Russia think flexible working creates new jobs, keeps people in work and provides opportunities for people to get back into work. Across the region, this feeling is more pronounced in Russia (91%), Spain (87%) and the UK (88%) – despite the relatively lower levels of flexible working in the latter two countries.

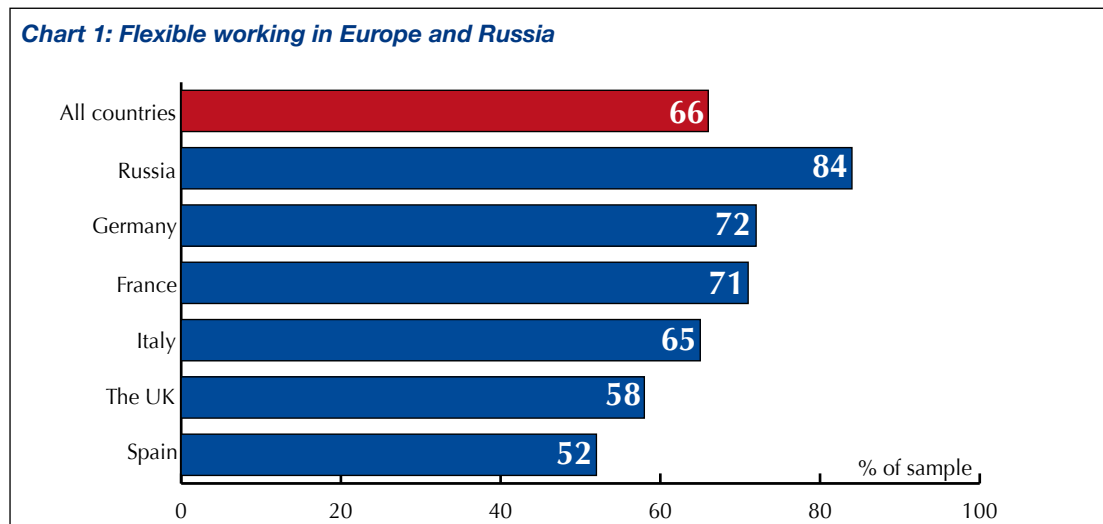
When employees’ current work and life situations are examined, the research shows that those whose employment situations have already benefited or could benefit from flexible working are more likely to agree with this statement.



**45% of senior managers and directors think motivation to adopt flexible working schemes comes from the prospect of attracting the best employees**

When it comes to what motivates employers to adopt flexible working policies, two factors emerge as front runners; one of which is wanting to keep talented workers with family commitments in work (59%). Furthermore, 45% of senior managers and directors think motivation to adopt flexible working schemes comes from the prospect of attracting the best employees to their companies; and 21% of these bosses think motivation also comes from the prospect of postponing retirement of experienced older employees.

**Chart 1: Flexible working in Europe and Russia**





## Employer benefits:

However, it would seem employers are not just motivated by the overall recruitment and employment benefits offered by flexible working – there are some obvious cost benefits to be had too. High productivity will doubtless translate into a cost benefit for employers and 59% of employees think their bosses are motivated by increased productivity through flexible working. And 1 in 2 employees themselves believe that people who work on a flexible basis are more productive – and 55% of senior managers and directors agree.

**67% think employees given such freedom and control over their working lives are happier employees**

Almost as many employees (46%) think flexible workers actually work harder during the time they work – and 52% of senior managers and directors concur; furthermore, 21% of flexible workers say they use the extra time they gain from not having to commute to actually do more work.

In addition, 35% of employees think flexible workers save their employer money from not being in the office / on-site full-time. And time wasted through downing tools to attend appointments, like the dentist, is thought to be reduced by flexible working by 70% of employees, as flexible workers can juggle life more easily working in this way.

On a less tangible note, 67% of the sample actually think employees given such freedom and control over their working lives are happier employees; an aspect that is appreciated by more people in Germany (72%), Russia (67%), Spain (68%) and the UK (76%). Similarly, 41% think flexible workers are more loyal to their employers – and 48% of senior managers and directors agree.

## Flexible attitudes?

In fact, it seems employees who work on a flexible basis also reward their employers with a flexible attitude to work, especially among middle and senior managers, parents, expectant new parents and the semi-retired. The research shows that there is a willingness to work in a variety of different scenarios and situations, including those typically

**Table 1: Attitudes among flexible workers about where and when they are willing to work:**

Situation	Flexible workers
In the evenings	44%
Over the weekend	37%
Whilst out of the office on training	34%
Whilst commuting to and from work	30%
When off work sick	28%
En route to a meeting	25%
On holiday	12%
None	7%

deemed as ‘personal time’ [Table 1]. Furthermore, those employees who do not currently work on a flexible basis also say they would be willing to work in a variety of these situations when it comes to flexible working.

German employees are especially flexible, whereas French workers are less accommodating; but more employees

in Russia (18%) would work whilst on holiday, compared to all the other countries (8-11%), and more employees in Germany (38%) and Russia (37%) would be willing to work when they were off sick, compared to France (14%); and fewer employees in France and Spain are happy to work over the weekend or in the evenings, compared to the other countries.

## German employees are especially flexible

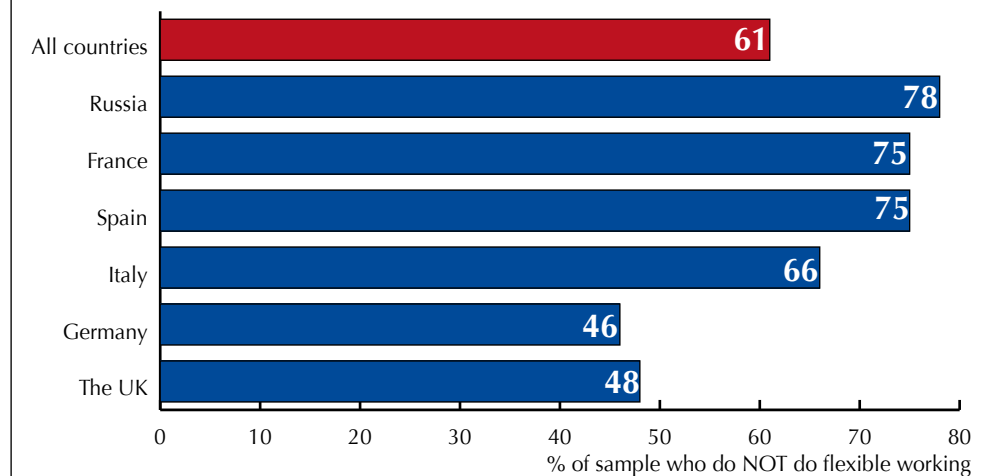
Within the UK, more flexibility is shown by employees in London and Scotland, whereas the least is offered by those working in Eastern England. Also, younger employees in Europe and Russia are generally more flexible when it comes to work situations and flexible working.

## Employee demands?

### Legislation:

Despite all the benefits to employers, 1 in 5 people (21%) think legislation would be needed to drive flexible working schemes in their country – an opinion held by more employees in France (29%), Italy (22%) and the UK (27%), and especially London (35%); and also in large companies

**Chart 2: Employees who would insist on flexible working if legislation were introduced**





(23%), compared to SMEs (18%).

But if such legislation were introduced, employers might be in for a shock as 61% of employees not currently working on a flexible basis would insist on being allowed to work this way [Chart 2]; and this is felt by more working parents (69%) and those expecting their first child (76%).

### Real sacrifice:

An indication of how strongly employees feel about this is evident by the sacrifice they would be willing to make. With such a balanced lifestyle enjoyed by those who work on a flexible basis, it is perhaps not surprising to find that 75% of employees would consider some form of reduction in their remuneration package in exchange for flexible working where they could commute less, spend more time working from home and have greater flexibility in life. Indeed, 69% of those who do not currently work this way would be willing to accept such cuts. This prospect is also more appealing to parents (79%), those expecting their first child (83%) and those in semi-retirement (85%).

The average amount employees are willing to sacrifice for this working lifestyle is 11% of the value of their benefits and salary package. Indeed, almost 1 in 10 employees would be willing to sacrifice more than 20% of their remuneration package.

But more employees in France (27%) and the UK (31%)

would not be willing to give up anything, whereas employees in Italy (12.4%) and Russia (12.7%) would be willing to sacrifice more on average, and indeed more than 20% of their total package.

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**75% of employees would consider some form of reduction in their remuneration package in exchange for flexible working**

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When it comes to company size, more employees in SMEs (77%) would consider some form of reduction, and the same is true for younger employees aged 18-24 (79%) and 25-34 (80%), but even 67% of those aged 50+ would consider taking a cut. That said, the older employees who are willing to make the sacrifice would be willing to sacrifice more of the value of their package, with 11% of those aged 50+ willing to sacrifice more than 20% of their package, compared to those aged 18-24 (7%).



## Wasting time?

### Commute times in Europe and Russia:

Overall, 91% of employees have to commute and the most common means of commuting is by driving a car with 60% of employees travelling to work in their own car. In addition, 20% take a bus, 6% take a taxi and 4% drive a motorbike to work. On the other hand, 7% take a train and 11% go on an underground train, subway or tube.

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**The average commute time for employees in Europe and Russia is 70 minutes**

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In contrast, the second most common mode of transport involved in the commute is actually walking and 32% of employees' journeys to work involve a walk. Similarly healthy and 'green' is getting to and from work on a pushbike and 6% of workers do this.

The research shows that the average commute time for employees in Europe and Russia is 70 minutes, and on average, employees use two modes of transport during their trip to work. It also shows that slightly more employees who do not work on a flexible basis (93%) have to commute, compared to 91% of flexible workers; but when flexible workers do commute, they do have slightly longer average journey times and they have to travel by more modes of transport, compared to workers who do not work on a flexible basis.

### Valuable time:

The research suggests that flexible workers save an average of 74 minutes a day when they don't have to commute into the office. Indeed, among employees who work on a flexible basis, 96% confirm that this style of working frees up time in their life due to less commuting etc; and many use this time to do a variety of activities, in addition to extra work and fitting in non-work appointments.

The most common activity is to spend the extra time with the family (56%) – and this is very common in Germany (64%) and Russia (61%); and 42% of flexible working parents also do this. Indeed, 19% use this time to do the

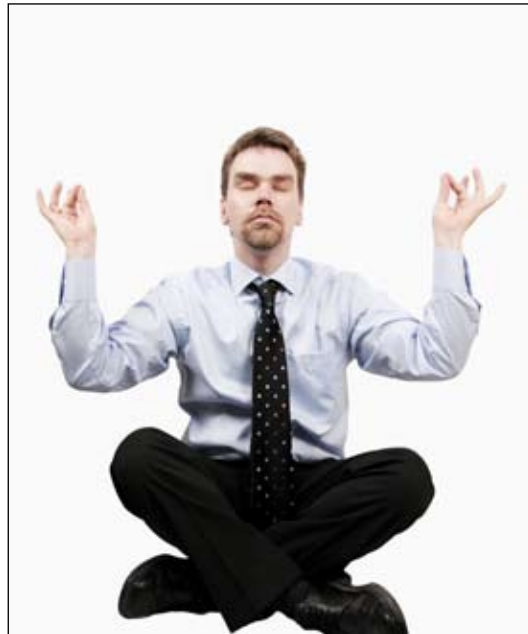


school run – and this practice is more common in France (30%), compared to all other countries (14-21%).

But 45% of flexible workers simply use the extra time gained to relax – also more common in Germany (54%), but not in Russia, the UK (both 40%) or Spain (45%). Furthermore, 22% have lie-ins – especially in Germany (38%) and the UK (25%).

In contrast, an energetic 1 in 4 employees (25%) use the time to do exercise – especially in Germany (32%) and Spain (35%). But a sophisticated 18% visit cultural venues and tourist attractions instead of commuting, and this is more common in Italy (25%) and Russia (28%) and least popular in the UK – indeed, only 15% of Londoners venture out and explore in this way with their extra time.

When it comes to seniority, more junior managers in Europe and Russia use their extra time for lie-ins (27%) and / or exercise (31%), whereas more senior managers use the time to do more work (35%), attend appointments (52%) or visit cultural attractions (22%). Those enjoying flexible working in semi-retirement tend to use the extra time it



gives them to visit cultural attractions (32%), to relax (50%) or indeed to do more work (32%). And, younger employees do more of these things with time freed up from flexible working, compared to those aged 50+.

Interestingly, those in large companies (24%) are more likely to use the extra time gained to have lie-ins, compared to their counterparts in SMEs (20%); whereas, more employees in SMEs (24%) do extra work with the time they gain, compared to their counterparts in large companies (19%).

## Pension top-up:

The research suggests we are seeing an emerging era where employees engage in a period of semi-retirement, typically through flexible working, before retiring completely. Indeed, 82% of employees, across all age groups, think they might look to use flexible working on an ad-hoc and part-time basis as a way of topping up their pension. In fact, the research shows this is already happening with 90% of semi-retired people in the sample working on a flexible basis.

### **90% of semi-retired people work on a flexible basis**

Looking to the future, more employees in Germany (88%), Russia (91%) and the UK (84%) think they might look to use flexible working to top up their pension. This concept is also slightly more popular among workers in SMEs (84%), compared to those in large companies (81%).



## Methodology:

This report was commissioned by Avaya and details quantitative research with employees across Europe and Russia. A sample of 3,518 interviews was collected with employees in 6 countries: France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain and the UK. Approximately 500 interviews were collected in all countries, except the UK, where 1000 were collected.

Respondents confirmed prior to interview whether they are in full- or part-time employment, their level of seniority, company size, age and their family status. For the UK sample, respondents also confirmed the region in which they live. The findings of the survey have been analysed systematically according to country, UK region, company size, age of respondent, working status (i.e. full- or part-time), whether or not employees work on a flexible basis, employee's level of seniority and by the respondent's life stage (i.e. expecting first child, parent or semi-retired).

The interviews were conducted using an online research panel between 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009. Before and during the interviews, respondents were not aware that Avaya had commissioned the research.

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